DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 152 636 SO 010 760

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TITLE Junior High School Student Understanding of Modern Society.
PUB DATE Nov 76
NOTE 12p.; For a related document, see SO 010 761; Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies (Washington, D. C., November 4-7, 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Research; *Curriculum Research; Deductive Methods; Educational Research; Grade 7; Grade 8; Inductive Methods; *Junior High School Students; Modern History; Social Science Research; *Social Studies; Sociology; *Student Attitudes; *Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Modernity

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the difference between junior high school student attitudes and images of modern society before and after instruction. The study was conducted in a junior high school located in north central United States. Subjects were students in social studies classes, grades 7 and 8. A stratified random sampling procedure was used in order to include an approximately equal number of boys, girls, blacks, new students, and seventh and eighth grade students in each class. Students were taught units about the American "Bill of Rights" and Japan by two tenured teachers. The teachers exchanged classes upon conclusion of each unit. A pre- and posttest design was employed, as were two teaching methods. One method used a textbook, while the other method used investigator devised case studies. Findings show that different patterns of teaching make a difference in the development of student understanding of modern society. It is recommended that further research be conducted on high school student attitudes and images before and after instruction about a modern society. (Author/JK)

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Junior High School Student Understanding of Modern Society

James Hantula

A major goal of education is development of student understanding of modern society (Maucker 1940). During instruction, students process information about modern society in different ways and at different levels of understanding. Two levels of understanding are intensional and extensional. The intensional level of understanding is indicated by characteristics. The extensional level of understanding is indicated by examples (Hunt and Metcalf 1968). Students express both levels of understanding by making generalizations. The generalizations include expression of attitude and images associated with modern society.

Illustrative of a generalization reflecting an intensional level of understanding is the following statement:

> Modern society is characterized by a democratic government, an industrial economy, and an urban population.

These major characteristics of modern society are subsumed by an attitude of "modernity" (Kahl 1968) or "becoming modern" (Inkeles 1974). A component of this attitude is the following expression:

> It makes a difference if people elect one or another candidate for things will change.

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Illustrative of a generalization reflecting an extensional level of understanding is the following statement:

> Examples of modern societies include the United States and Japan.

These examples of modern societies are subsumed by images of more modern and less modern nations. One of these images is the

following expression:

The United States is more modern than Japan.

An Initial Foray

Increase in attitude of "modernity" is expected for each grade although more marked for elementary students (Holsinger 1973) than secondary students (Cunningham 1972). Student images of modern society are largely unknown. Practical suggestions for teaching about modern society are available (Henderson 1968, Hantula 1969, Hantula 1976). Differences at the beginning and conclusion of a unit of instruction, however, have seldom been investigated. As an initial foray, the following investigation of junior high school student understanding of modern society was undertaken.

The investigation sought to answer two questions:

(1) Is there a difference between junior high school student attitudes before and after instruction about a modern society?

(2) Is there a difference between junior high school student images of modern society before and after instruction about a modern society?

Procedure

Answers to these questions were sought in an investigation conducted in a junior high school located in north central United States. Subjects (N = 60) were students in social studies classes, grades 7 and 8. Subjects were reassigned to two new classes which met at the same time. A stratified random sampling procedure was used in order to include an approximately equal number of boys, girls, blacks, new students, seventh and eighth grade students in each new multigrade class. Stanford Achievement social studies test results for grade 7 and grade 8 indicated the estimated grade mean = to 8.49 for grade 7, = to 9.46 for grade 8.

In this multigrade learning environment, students were taught a unit on the American "bill of rights" and a unit on Japan by two tenured social studies teachers. The teachers exchanged classes upon conclusion of each twelve day unit. Within the context of intact groups, a randomized four group pretest/posttest design was employed. Control variables were grade, sex, age and period of class. The independent variable was treatment. Two treatments were used. Treatment A made use of a textbook (Hane 1973). The pattern of teaching followed in Treatment A is described below:

TREATMENT A

Instruction about Japan was presented in ten simple deductive lessons to secondary students who acquired facts by memorization and translation.

↓

Objectives were predetermined by the teacher. "Facts" were emphasized during instruction.

↓

Teaching strategy was to pretest, inform, and posttest. Teaching devices were questions posed by the teacher. Student answers were evaluated by the teacher for accuracy.

↓

Information about Japan was processed by the teacher and students with familiar timelines, maps, and comparisons to the United States. No Japanese words, phrases, primary sources, or artifacts were used. Information was obtained from a single source, the textbook.

Treatment B made use of investigator devised case studies. The pattern of teaching followed in Treatment B is described below:

TREATMENT B

Instruction about Nippon was presented in ten structured inductive lessons to secondary students who developed insight by interpretation, application, analysis, and synthesis.

↓

Objectives were suggested by the teacher prior to instruction.

↓

Teaching strategy was to pretest, determine objectives and procedures with students, and posttest. Teaching devices were questions posed by the teacher and students. Student answers were evaluated for insight into the problem under discussion.

↓

Information about Nippon was processed by the teacher and students with familiar and unfamiliar timelines, maps, and comparisons to other cultures. When appropriate. Nipponese words, phrases, primary sources, and artifacts were used. Information was obtained from multimedia.

ANOVA of the dependent measures revealed no significant differences among groups by treatment or grade.

Differences in Attitude Before and After Instruction

(1)

To answer the first question under investigation, the following null

hypothesis was tested:

> There is no difference between junior high school attitude before and after instruction about Japan.

A .05 level of significance was used in testing the null hypothesis with the students' "t" test. The dependent variable was a score derived from subjects' responses to eight statements which constitute the "core of modernity" (Kahl 1968, page 43). The statements were phrased in the direction of tradition. A low score indicated more "modernity;" a high score indicated less "modernity."

The eight statements are noted below:

No.	Statements
1.	With things as they are today, an intelligent person ought to think only about the present, without worrying about what is going to happen tomorrow.
2.	In order to be happy, one must behave in ways that other people desire, even if one has to suppress his own ideas sometimes.
3.	This city is not too friendly a place; you can only make friends with people who are pretty much of the same sort as yourself.
4.	Making plans only brings unhappiness, because the plans are hard to fulfill.
5.	When looking for a job, a person ought to find a position in a place located near his parents, even if that means losing a good opportunity elsewhere.
6.	People in a big city are cold and impersonal; it is hard to make new friends.
7.	The son of a laboring man does not have a very good chance of rising into the liberal professions.
8.	It doesn't make much difference if the people elect one or another candidate, for nothing will change.

Subjects responded to the eight statements on IBM answer sheet #556 as follows: agree very much (4); agree a little (3); disagree a little

(2); disagree very much (1). By summing responses, subjects achieved the following "modernity" scores prior to instruction:

Statement	Modernity Score
1	99
2	97
3	92
4	84
5	63
6	95
7	82
8	79

When summed, "modernity" scores = 691 and divided by 8 = 86.38. The minimum possible score was 56 (N=56 x 1). The maximum possible score was 224 (N=56 x 4). The median of possible scores was 112. Respondents tended to cluster below the theoretical median but not in the lowest quartile.

After instruction about Japan, subjects achieved the following "modernity" scores:

Item #	"Modernity" Score
1	96
2	123
3	113
4	106
5	86
6	96
7	112
8	81

When summed,"modernity" scores = 813 and divided by 8 = 101.63. The minimum possible score was again 56 (N=56 x 1). The maximum possible score was again 224 (N=56 x 4). The median of possible scores was again 112. Subjects tended to cluster again below the median but markedly less so than prior to instruction.

In order to test the null hypothesis, subjects' responses were rescored by assigning values in reverse order and determining means of responses to each statement before and after instruction. Means of responses to the eight statements as a set were also determined. A significant difference was apparent between means of responses to statement 7. at the .05 level (t = 2.65). No other significant differences were apparent. A summary of the significant differences is noted below:

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN ATTITUDE

B = Before Instruction A = After Instruction

STATE-MENT	NO. OF CASES	MEAN	S.D.	S.E.	*	MEAN	S.D.	S.E.	*	t VALUE	D.F.	2-TAIL P
7.B					*				*			
		3.3800	0.697	0.099	*				*			
	50				*	0.4000	1.069	0.151	*	2.65	49	0.011
		2.9800	0.915	0.129	*				*			
7.A					*				*			

Differences in Image
Before and After Instruction

(2)

To answer the second question under investigation, the following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no difference between junior high school images before and after instruction about Japan.

A .05 level of significance was used in testing the null hypothesis with the students' "t" test. The dependent variable was subjects ranking of the nine most modern nations in the world from a list devised by the investigator. The list of nations is noted below:

List of Nations

1. Argentina
2. Australia
3. Brazil
4. Canada
5. China (Mainland)
6. England (Great Britain)
7. Egypt
8. Ethiopia
9. France
10. Germany (West)
11. India
12. Indonesia
13. Israel
14. Japan
15. Mexico
16. Netherlands (Holland)
17. Nigeria
18. South Africa
19. Soviet Union (Russia)
20. Scandinavia (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden)
21. Turkey
22. United States

Subjects ranked their choices of the nine most modern nations in the world on IBM answer sheet #556 as follows: 1 = the most modern nation, 2 = the next most modern nation... and 9 the least modern nation. In order to test the null hypothesis, means of choices were determined before and after instruction. A significant difference was apparent between means of choices of Japan at the .05 level ($t = 2.30$). A summary of the significant differences is noted below:

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN IMAGE

B = Before Instruction A = After Instruction

Nation	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	S.E.	*	Mean	S.D.	S.E.	*	t Value	D.F.	2-Tail P
Japan B	30	4.6667	2.496	0.456	*	1.0667	2.545	0.465	*	2.30	29	0.029
		3.6000	1.793	0.327	*				*			
Japan A					*				*			

Conclusion

Outcomes of the investigation suggested different patterns of teaching do make a difference in the development of junior high school student understanding of modern society. Learning about Japan enables junior high school students to extend the intensional and extensional meanings of modern society. Moreover, the measures used to evaluate attitudes and images can be readily translated into teaching devices for generating student hypotheses. By gathering supporting descriptions and criteria for each hypotheses, students also extend skills in social studies education.

For the researcher, the investigation suggests several questions for further study. Among these questions are:

Is there a difference between senior high school student attitudes before and after instruction about a modern society?

Is there a difference between senior high school student images of modern society before and after instruction about a modern society?

Is there a difference in extensional and intensional meanings of modern society between less modern and more modern students?

Additional research is required to answer these questions. The answers will be useful for providing evidence of student understanding of modern society.

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